SPAWN
THE DARK AGES
Image
2
DIGITAL EDITION
COVER: Liam McCormack-Sharp

Todd McFarlane & Image Comics Presents

Forsaken

Dedicated to Sam Silbert

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SPAWN DARK AGES 1 SUMMARY:

The Black Knight, known as Lord Covenant when he left to fight in the Crusades, has made a painful and gruesome return from the grave. Amidst his confusing return, he immediately unleashes his anger on Baron Rivalen's Captain of Arms, Guy DuBlanc in revenge for injustices served upon the poor unfortunate peasants. Later, when the Black Knight returns to his crumbling castle, he is met by his time-honored mentor, Cogliostro.

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SPAWN® THE DARK AGES

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I CAN SEE BY YOUR EYES THAT YOU DOUBT MY TALE. BUT, BY MY WORD, EVERY DROP OF IT IS TRUE.
THE BLACK KNIGHT HAD RETURNED HOME AND DISCOVERED HE WAS NOT ALONE.

He advanced the crumbling stair, the once stout timbers of the gallery bowing beneath his unearthly frame. Something in him stirred. Faint, shimmering ghosts of memory that hung just out of reach... taunting, teasing him.
It was a strange old wanderer who greeted him, who bade him, "Welcome home, HELLSPAWN!"
Whatever confusion and terror he may have felt, he could not speak it. His throat tight and constricted, he struggled mightily to utter anything, like a child trying to form words for the first time...
WH-WHO...?
Forsaken

WHO *INDEED!* THEY'VE CALLED ME MANY NAMES IN MY TIME *MERRIDYN... MERLIN... PROSPERO... COGLIOSTRO...*
I'M YOUR NEW TUTOR, BOYO. I'M HERE TO SQUIRE YOU IN YOUR NEW *"CAREER."* AND BY THE LOOK OF IT, YOU COULD USE ALL THE HELP...
NUH-NUH-NO...

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AH, YOU TRULY ARE LOST, AREN'T YOU? VERY WELL. BUT THIS WON'T BE PLEASANT, I WARN YOU!
WITH THAT, THE OLD CONJURER RAISED HIS HAND AND FREED THE GHOSTS INSIDE.
THE TRUTH FELL UPON THE BLACK KNIGHT LIKE AN AVALANCHE.
HIS NAME, WHEN HE WAS A MAN, WAS *LORD IAIN COVENANT,* MASTER OF THE FOREST OF RHYLL AND LANDS SURROUNDING.
A GOOD MAN. BUT A *GUILTY* ONE, AS WELL.
THERE WERE SINS FOR WHICH HE SOUGHT ABSOLUTION, AND SO HE JOINED THE *POPE'S CRUSADE* AND LEFT HIS COUNTRY BEHIND.

He left his home to go spill infidel blood upon foreign ground, all in the name of *God Almighty.*

A mighty knight, he fought with the strength of angels against the warriors of *Saladin*. He felt reborn; the dust of the road and the blood of battle had baptized him anew.

Many of his traveling companions were base opportunists, using the name of God as an excuse to rape and plunder their eastern neighbors.

But Covenant believed in the righteousness of his cause. He swore he would kill every Muslim from Gibraltar to Jerusalem, and ride like a king into the holy city, there to wash the sins of his past from his hands.

But it was not to be. He died in the siege of a foreign city he never even knew the name of. Still, as he felt his body growing cold, a weak smile spread across his lips.

He whispered a benediction to himself and prepared to return to the kingdom of heaven, certain he had earned his eternal rest.

He imagined Heaven would reward him for the many infidels he slaughtered in the name of the savior, that the angels would sing his praises...

HE WAS WRONG.

THE ANGELS HAD CAST HIM INTO HELL, WHERE THE DEVIL HAD PLANS OF HIS OWN.
A DEAL IS OFFERED.
A CURSE IS BESTOWED.
AND A NEW COVENANT IS SEALED IN BLOOD.
REMADE IN THE IMAGE OF HIS NEW MASTER, A WARRIOR FORGED IN THE FURNACES OF PERDITION, SENT BACK TO EARTH TO TRAIN FOR THE GREAT WAR TO COME...

UGH!
I WILL NOT GUESS AT THE PAIN AND ANGUISH THIS KNOWLEDGE MUST HAVE BROUGHT.
HE STORMED OUT INTO THE NIGHT, CHARGING ACROSS FALLOW FIELDS, SCREAMING OUT A CURSE INTO THE NIGHT.
YE DAMN FOOL! YOU'LL BE BACK.
RAIN PELTING HIM LIKE ICY NEEDLES, HE CURSED HIMSELF AND CURSED THE MADMAN OF ROME WHO SENT HIM ON HIS DEVIL'S ERRAND.
AND LASTLY, HE SHOUTED CURSES TO *HEAVEN* AND DENOUNCED THE *GOD* WHO DAMNED HIM TO HIS FATE

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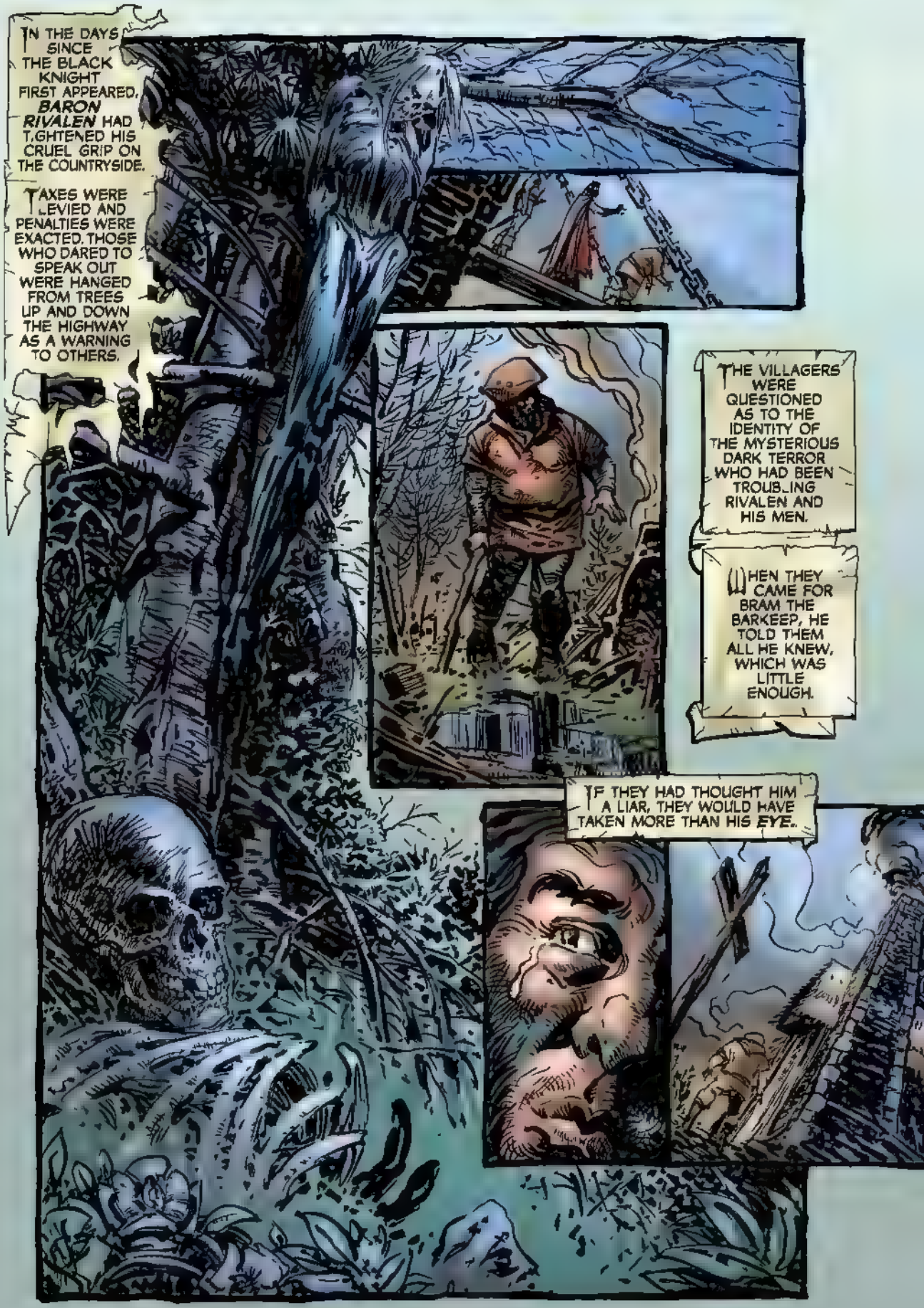
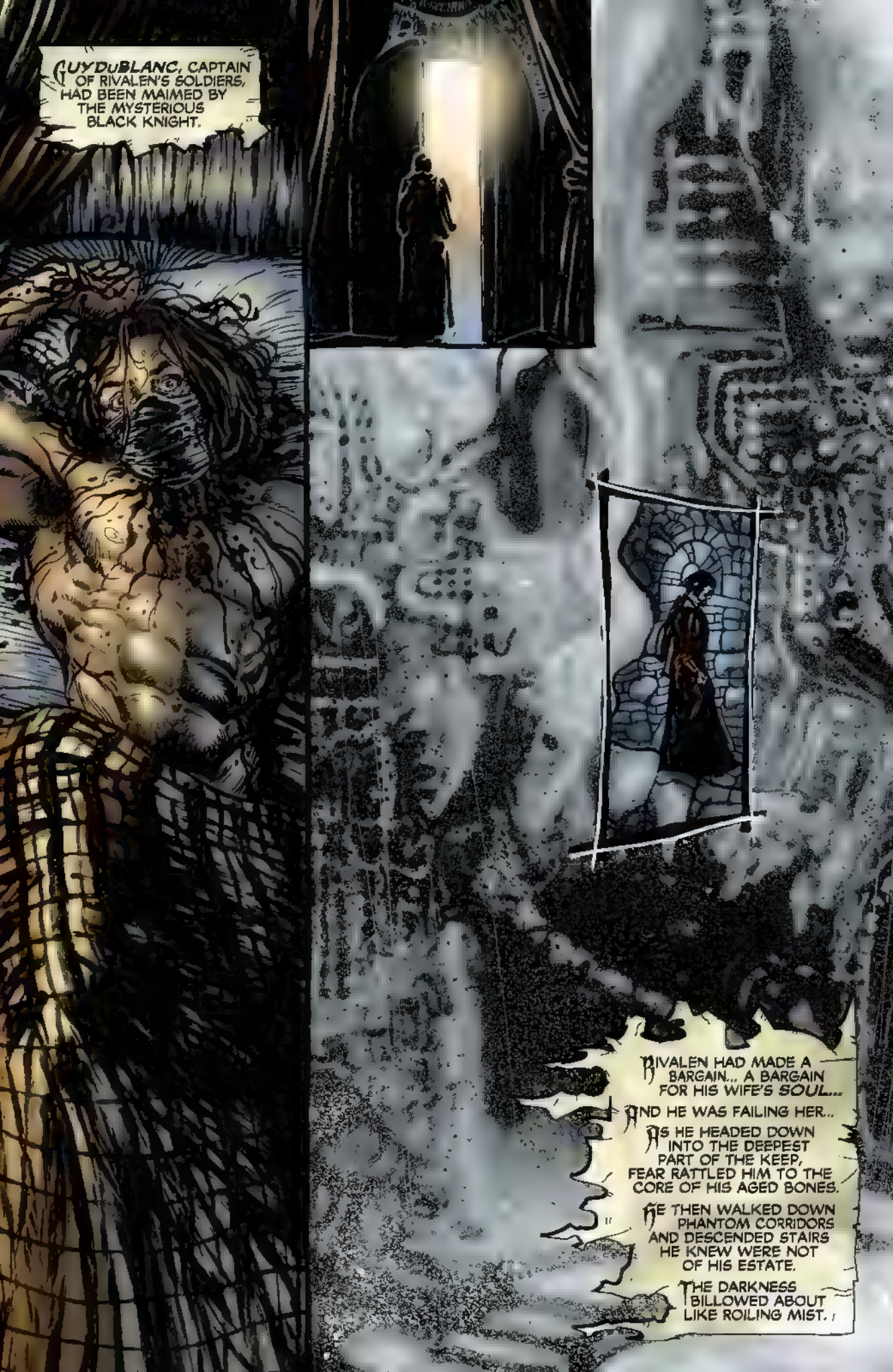
MY LORD, MY LORD... WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?
AND THEN HE WEPT.


IN THE DAYS SINCE THE BLACK KNIGHT FIRST APPEARED, BARON RIVALEN HAD TIGHTENED HIS CRUEL GRIP ON THE COUNTRYSIDE.
TAXES WERE LEVIED AND PENALTIES WERE EXACTED. THOSE WHO DARED TO SPEAK OUT WERE HANGED FROM TREES UP AND DOWN THE HIGHWAY AS A WARNING TO OTHERS.
THE VILLAGERS WERE QUESTIONED AS TO THE IDENTITY OF THE MYSTERIOUS DARK TERROR WHO HAD BEEN TROUBLING RIVALEN AND HIS MEN.
WHEN THEY CAME FOR BRAM THE BARKEEP, HE TOLD THEM ALL HE KNEW, WHICH WAS LITTLE ENOUGH.
IF THEY HAD THOUGHT HIM A LIAR, THEY WOULD HAVE TAKEN MORE THAN HIS EYE.

Returning to the bosom of his loved ones, Bram felt little relief.
Winter was growing near and the Baron's men had burned much of their food stores and laid a heavy tax on the rest.
Those not tortured to death would soon starve.
There was quiet talk of rebellion, about standing up to the despotic usurper who had claimed lordship over their lands since Covenant had left.
But they where simple folk -- craftsmen and tillers of the earth -- and had no one to lead them.
The old women prayed in hushed tones for a miracle.
But the young boy, Pevvyn, with the optimism of youth, believed in his heart that a champion had already been sent to deliver them.

As another night fell on Baron Rivalen's castle, his soul grew a little bit heavier.
For all his orders of tyranny, for all his commands of terror, Rivalen was a tired old man with no joy in his life.
His wife, ELOISE, had succumbed to some mysterious sickness and had not stirred for days.
Her skin was cold to the touch.
He knew if he did not succeed in his dark endeavors, he would soon lose her.
But what could he do?


GUY DuBLANC, CAPTAIN OF RIVALEN'S SOLDIERS, HAD BEEN MAIMED BY THE MYSTERIOUS BLACK KNIGHT.
RIVALEN HAD MADE A BARGAIN... A BARGAIN FOR HIS WIFE'S SOUL...
AND HE WAS FAILING HER...
AS HE HEADED DOWN INTO THE DEEPEST PART OF THE KEEP, FEAR RATTLED HIM TO THE CORE OF HIS AGED BONES.
HE THEN WALKED DOWN PHANTOM CORRIDORS AND DESCENDED STAIRS HE KNEW WERE NOT OF HIS ESTATE.
THE DARKNESS BILLOWED ABOUT LIKE ROILING MIST.

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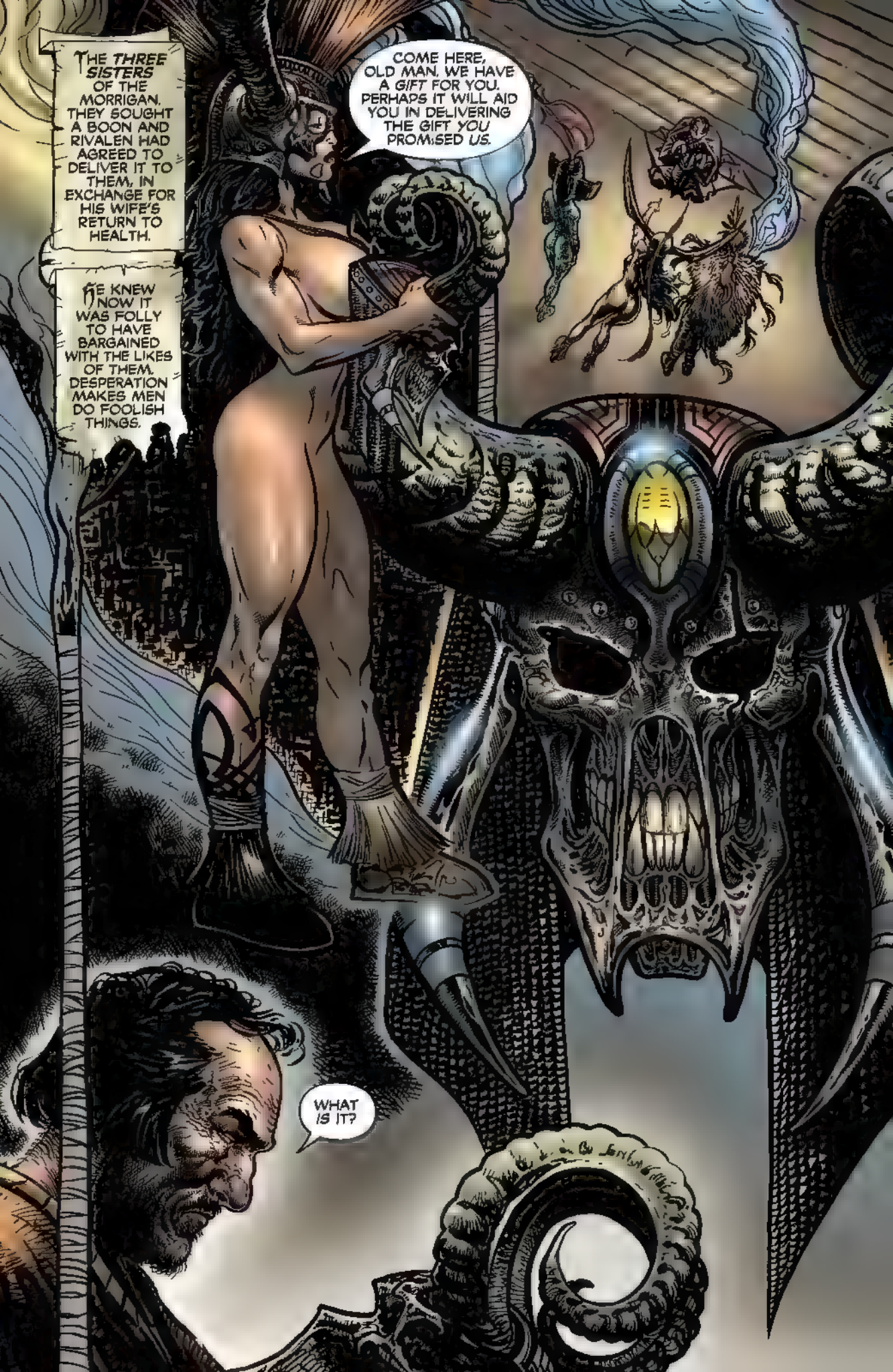
THE THREE SISTERS OF THE MORRIGAN. THEY SOUGHT A BOON AND RIVALEN HAD AGREED TO DELIVER IT TO THEM, IN EXCHANGE FOR HIS WIFE'S RETURN TO HEALTH.
HE KNEW NOW IT WAS FOLLY TO HAVE BARGAINED WITH THE LIKES OF THEM. DESPERATION MAKES MEN DO FOOLISH THINGS.
COME HERE, OLD MAN. WE HAVE A GIFT FOR YOU. PERHAPS IT WILL AID YOU IN DELIVERING THE GIFT YOU PROMISED US.
WHAT IS IT?

By now the rain had stopped and the hellborne knight of darkness wandered aimlessly through a deep wood.
Lost in reverie, he damned both heaven and hell alike.
His steed gave a start, as if an intruder were near, but the HELLSPAWN saw nothing.
A fog had grown up around him and soon it felt as if it were his MIND that were clouded.
As if he were held in the terrible arms of NIGHTMARE.

DEEPER AND DEEPER HE SLIPPED INTO THE STREAM, AS IF FLOATING BETWEEN WORLDS ON THE GOSSAMER WINGS OF A DREAM.
PART OF HIM STIRRED WITH HOPE. PERHAPS IT WAS JUST A TERRIBLE DREAM.
PERHAPS HE WOULD WAKE FROM SLUMBER WARM AND SAFE IN HIS HOME... THE DEVIL AND HIS DEALS JUST SPECTRES OF HIS OWN MIND.
IF ONLY HE COULD JUST OPEN HIS EYES.

But it was no dream...
No mere visit from the shores of nightmare.
Something clawed deep inside him and leeched the deepest secrets of his soul from him, the faintest sound of laughter ringing in his ears.

AND IT WAS NOTHING HE COULD HAVE EVER IMAGINED THAT GREETED HIM...

BEHOLD, MY SISTERS!
A NEW PLAYTHING FOR US!
ME FIRST!
To Be Continued

Darkness